

APRIL 2022

The Homeless Programs Office (HPO) newsletter contains news and information about VA's ongoing effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.



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Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.

Message From Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office



At VA, we believe every Veteran who has served their nation deserves a safe place to call home, and we believe this goal is obtainable when we all work together.

I am thrilled to announce that we are about to take a major step toward achieving this goal. As part of VA Secretary Denis McDonough's new goals to end Veteran homelessness announced in February, VA has issued a national challenge to permanently house 38,000 Veterans in 2022. Please keep an eye out for more information on this exciting initiative. I could not be more confident that the

people who comprise the VHA Homeless Programs will play an important role in fulfilling this challenge.

As we work to help every Veteran exit homelessness, we must also continue preventing Veterans from entering homelessness by acknowledging the underlying risks unique to the military and Veteran population.

[Read Monica's full message.](#)

Around HPO

[Volunteer Recognition Day](#)

VHA Homeless Programs is only as strong as the individuals who serve within it. This month, as we celebrate Volunteer Recognition Day (April 20), we want to draw attention to the incredible work our volunteers do to help improve the lives of Veterans



facing homelessness. Their support is shown through their work at [Stand Down events](#), providing food, clothing and health screenings to homeless and at-risk Veterans; [housing partnerships](#), which provide access to affordable housing options; [employment partnerships](#), which offer opportunities to obtain a stable job and steady income; and [community partnerships](#), which help promote and expand national and community efforts.

Thank you to all our volunteers – your support means everything to us and the Veterans we serve!



[Chats with the Chief – Monica Diaz](#)

In this episode of Chats with the Chief, Jon M. Jensen, VHA chief of staff, is joined by Monica Diaz, executive director of the VA Homeless Programs Office, where they talk about the progress toward ending Veteran

homelessness and the collaborative partnerships involved. They also discuss the impact VA services have had on Diaz's life, the importance of the annual PIT count, the unique challenges of helping Veterans during a pandemic. [Watch the full episode.](#)

[Stress Awareness Month](#)

The stress caused by emotional scars of service can place Veterans at risk of homelessness. During Stress Awareness Month, learn about the mental health services offered by VA that can alleviate stress and help Veterans lead healthier lives [here](#).





[Second Chance Month](#)

One of the most damaging causes and consequences of reincarceration is something justice-involved Veterans too-often lack: a home. During Second Chance Month, take time to learn about the [important steps Americans can take in supporting](#)

[Veterans with justice involvement](#).

[Effective Practices in HUD-VASH Contracting](#)

The Housing and Urban Development VA-Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Contracting Community of Practice (CCoP) group was established to share strong and innovative practices in contracting for HUD-VASH case management services. To ensure adequate staffing so Veterans can receive the case management support they need, they have established useful contracts with community providers.



[Read the full white paper](#) to learn more.



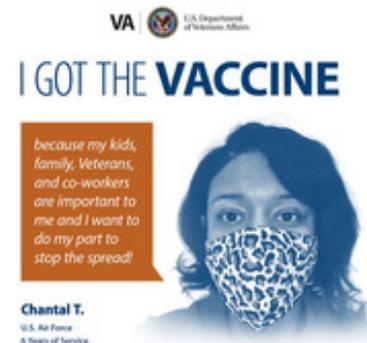
[Smartphone Training Education for Veterans through the VA Salem Health Care System \(VASHCS\)](#)

Staff at VA Salem developed a training and education on the use of smartphones to keep Veterans engaged in VA health care services. Learn about how they are using a four-session psychoeducation group called “Phone and Technology Education” to increase the use of telehealth services for homeless and formerly homeless Veterans [here](#).

HPO COVID-19 Response and Updates

Data continue to show the importance of vaccination and booster doses to protect individuals both from infection and severe outcomes of COVID-19. The CDC has provided [updated guidance](#) that allows a second booster of the COVID-19 vaccine to be administered at least 4 months after a first booster for those who fit any of the following criteria:

- Individuals at least 50 years of age
- Individuals with immune compromise
- Individuals of any age who received the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 shot for their initial vaccine and booster dose



[Click here](#) for information on how to get a COVID-19 vaccine or booster through VA.

HPO Staff Spotlight: Matthew Stimmel, PhD



As National Training Director, Matthew Stimmel is responsible for developing and sustaining the education and training of more than 400 Veterans Justice Program (VJP) field staff – but his role often surpasses these expectations. Stimmel is critical to a number of programs and initiatives throughout HPO, including co-leading the Racial Equity and Racial Justice Workgroup, providing educational curriculums to support the development of innovative practices across homeless programs, and offering training content for partners.

Stimmel has a strong understanding of the criminal justice system and the related cycle Veterans can find themselves in, believing strongly that these Veterans deserve support rather than punishment – and that like all Veterans, they deserve access to the care they earned while serving our country.

[Read Stimmel's full spotlight](#) to learn more about what he does to support the training and education of VJP employees, as well as how he supports justice-involved Veterans across the board.

HPO Fact of the Month

Did you know that VA can pay certain benefits to Veterans who are incarcerated in a Federal, State, or local penal institution?

It's important that justice-involved Veterans are familiar with VA benefits, including which ones they may still be eligible to receive. The amount VA can pay depends on the type of benefit and reason for incarceration.



Learn more about how incarceration affects eligibility for VA benefits [here](#).